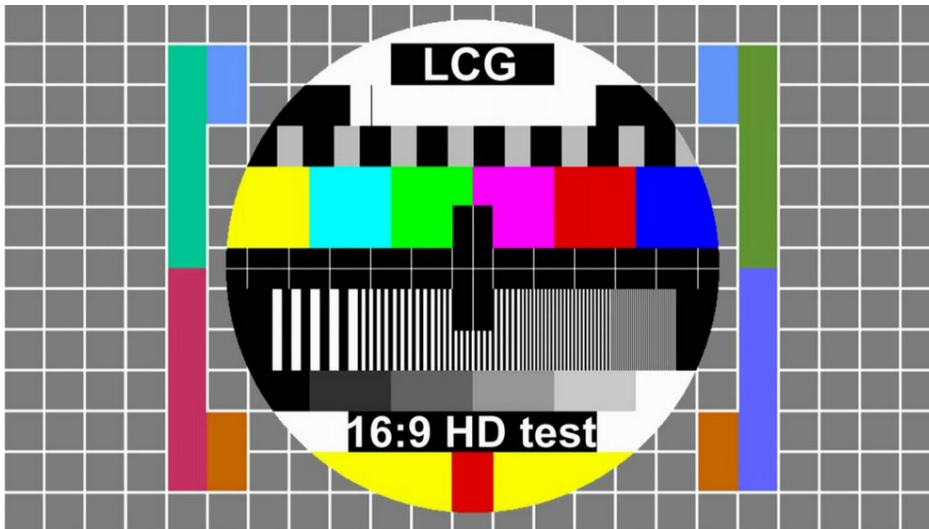


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British government made it clear in what direction wants to take the country by proposing a set of legislation including the counter-terrorism bill targeting electronic media. Ofcom as the UK regulatory body would be given new powers to take actions against channels which broadcast extremist content, although it is unclear whether they will be able to intervene before or after transmission.

[The Guardian wrote in its editorial](#) that “pre-programme vetting is such a terrible idea that it is hard to know where to begin”. Mike Jempson of [MediaWise](#) told MDI that one of his concerns is matter of definition. “Who is to determine what is regarded as extremism?”

“Would it be politicians, judges or Ofcom bureaucrats? There are plenty of laws in place which limit what a broadcaster or journalists may report and it is vital that the public understands what is behind any perceived threat or threat to the public safety. Criminalising journalists and broadcasters is yet another example of shooting the messenger,” says Jempson.

The Home Office's Prevent strategy defines extremism as "vocal or active opposition to

fundamental British values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”.

“Denying the right to free speech to anyone who falls foul of this description has already worried senior parliamentarians,” [reports the BBC](#) quoting the former attorney general Dominic Grieve QC who is concerned that “extremism powers could result in people being prosecuted for having a point of view”.

Several media outlets and experts raised the issue of [“May’s censorship plan”](#), but it seems like the mainstream media were more concerned [with an apparent row between two Cabinet’s ministers](#) on counter -terrorism bill than with the consequences of the bill itself.



In comments prior to the Queen’s speech, parallels were made between media in the UK and other countries that got criticised by official London for having some sort of censorship. The business secretary Sajid Javid was right to warn his colleague Theresa May [in his letter leaked to the Guardian](#)

that “other countries with a pre-transmission regulatory regime are not known for their compliance with rights relating to freedom of expression and government may not wish to be associated with such regimes.” In

[his most recent interview](#)

for the BBC though, Javid tried to convince British public that “resulting plan would be well-balanced and that at its heart will be the protection of freedom of speech”.

“Who knows, then, how far censorship could go,” asks the Guardian adding that “the Conservative party backed the dogged resistance of many newspapers to the decidedly indirect official influence over press self-regulation [envisaged in the Leveson report](#) . It can hardly be consistent with this libertarian stance to begin meddling directly in broadcast”.

In an interview for MDI website, Mike Jempson gave an example of MED TV, a London-based international TV station which licence was revoked in 1999 due to “likeliness to encourage or incite crime or lead to disorder”. It was believed at the time that MED TV had links with [PKK](#) . “It is ironic that one of the broadcasters taken off air by Ofcom was the one broadcasting to the Kurdish community and yet, Britain and the West are now supporting the so called terrorist organisations whose ideas had been aired by this TV station,” warns Jempson.

The Guardian reminds of “half a precedent, in Margaret Thatcher’s attempts to starve Irish Republicanism of the ‘oxygen of publicity’”.

“This ended in the requirement that Sinn Féin spokespeople appear on the screen while hidden actors dubbed their words. The Day Today soon had [a spoof Gerry Adams inhale helium](#) , in order to raise his voice to a squeak and “subtract credibility from his statements”. Poking around with television production doesn’t bring victory in the publicity war against terrorism: it brings absurdity. A generation on, censorship would be more hopeless still. If video clips are luring youngsters towards the jihadis, these will not be from controversial footage on (say) Channel 4 News, but material that fanatics are simply creating and uploading themselves,” reports [the Guardian](#)

One of the possible consequences would be anti-immigrant sentiment, says [Global Research](#) : “Together with a sweeping attack on democratic rights and legal norms, the Conservatives’ anti-terror bill will further advance the government’s right-wing agenda of whipping up anti-immigrant sentiment. New powers will be established to deny immigrants entry on the grounds of preaching extremist views”.

Apart from monitoring media and possibility for ‘extremists’ messages to be broadcasted’, David Cameron’s government will give police and spies greater powers to monitor internet and phone use. Downing Street said that measures in the Investigatory Powers Bill would provide the

authorities "with the tools to keep you and your family safe", but civil liberties campaigners claim it will pave the way for mass surveillance of UK citizens.

[Global Research](#) says that "the planned actions in the UK are part of an escalating international assault on democratic rights" reminding that earlier this month, the French National Assembly passed legislation sanctioning mass spying and other police state measures. Also this month, the Canadian House of Commons passed the "Anti-Terror Act," which gave the state vast new powers, including the ability to target any activities declared a danger to "national security."